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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001569

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STATE FOR EAP/MTS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [RP](#)  
SUBJECT: AMCIT RETURNS TO PHILIPPINES TO TESTIFY ON ALLEGED  
ABDUCTION

REF: A. MANILA 1363 (AMCIT IN ALLEGED ABDUCTION TO SUE  
PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT IN U.S. COURT)  
[1](#)B. MANILA 1113 (ALLEGED AMCIT ABDUCTION AND RELEASE)

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: AmCit social activist Melissa Roxas returned to the Philippines this week to participate in hearings at the Commission on Human Rights and Court of Appeals on her alleged May abduction and torture in Tarlac Province by persons she believed to be government security forces. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR), which is providing security for her visit, received her testimony July 23 as part of its own investigation; Roxas' next testimony will be given July 30 at the Court of Appeals as part of her effort to obtain a protective writ from the Court. A member of the U.S. affiliate of the Philippines-based Bayan leftist group, Roxas refused Philippine police and U.S. Embassy assistance after being released by her alleged captors on May 25 (reftel B), and in Los Angeles, later canceled a meeting with FBI agents to provide an official affidavit. The Philippine government and military deny responsibility for her alleged abduction, and officials have publicly agreed to cooperate with investigations. The activist's return to Manila and her high-profile press conferences are giving anti-Arroyo administration groups a platform for their causes at a time when the rest of the country is paying close attention to the news: President Arroyo will deliver her final State of the Nation Address on July 27, and will then travel to Washington for a July 30 meeting at the White House and a July 31 meeting with U.S. Attorney General Holder. END SUMMARY.

ROXAS RETURNS TO THE PHILIPPINES  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Melissa Roxas, a Filipino-American activist who accused government security forces of abducting and torturing her over seven days in late May (reftel B), returned to Manila July 21 to attend two hearings at the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Court of Appeals on July 23 and 30, respectively. At the July 23 CHR hearing, Roxas discussed the manner of her abduction and captivity, and attempted to give descriptions of her captors. Next week, the Court of Appeals will review her petition for a protective writ, known as a writ of amparo, which if granted will require government officials to produce information about the abduction (reftel A). In remarks to the press, Roxas said she returned to the Philippines to pursue the case against her abductors and to "reveal the truth" about the incident. Press reports noted that a 10-member delegation of the United Methodist Church's California Nevada Conference accompanied Roxas back to the Philippines to conduct its own investigation.

GOVERNMENT AGREES TO COOPERATE, DENIES INVOLVEMENT  
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13. (SBU) Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Victor Ibrado said that the AFP would conduct its own investigation into the alleged abduction of Roxas and would cooperate with other investigations, though he indicated there was no evidence of military involvement in the incident. Malacanang Palace Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told press that the government was committed to investigating the case, and that Roxas' testimony at the CHR and the Court of Appeals would help with that investigation.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION NOTIFIES AMBASSADOR  
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14. (C) Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Chair Leila De Lima notified the Ambassador July 18 of Roxas' intended return. In a follow-up July 21 conversation, De Lima said that the CHR, though unaccustomed to doing so, agreed to provide protection for Roxas so that the Commission's own investigation could continue. De Lima gently probed whether the U.S. Embassy would be able to provide protection for Roxas. The Ambassador said this kind of arrangement was not possible, and said that Embassy officials told Roxas before her mid-June return to Los Angeles that the U.S. could not offer personal protection if she decided to return to the Philippines, though they did offer to help her contact the Philippine National Police. De Lima said the CHR had likewise offered assistance through the police, but said that Roxas refused. Recounting her experience of greeting Roxas upon her July 21 arrival in Manila, De Lima expressed some surprise that Representative Satur Ocampo, co-founder of the communist group National Democratic Front of the Philippines,

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was also on hand to greet Roxas. The Ambassador thanked the CHR for looking after the safety of Roxas, and said that the U.S. takes seriously all incidents involving U.S. citizens, adding that thoughtful investigation seemed the best course of action in this case.

U.S. OFFICIALS ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN AFFIDAVIT  
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15. (C) Post's Legatt said that, after Roxas' mid-June return to Los Angeles, agents at the FBI Los Angeles Field Office attempted to contact her on June 28 to set an appointment to obtain her affidavit. Unable to reach her by phone, agents visited her house and met her parents to relay the message regarding their availability for a meeting. Roxas and her attorney finally contacted the FBI on June 29 and agreed to an afternoon meeting, but Roxas canceled shortly thereafter. A second attorney called the FBI on June 30 and offered to invite the agents to a meeting with Roxas at his office before July 12, but the attorney did not call again to offer a specific date. The first attorney later told the FBI that Roxas was too emotionally distraught to talk about her experience with anyone, and that was why she had not yet agreed to a meeting.

COMMENT  
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16. (C) Bayan, its U.S. affiliate Bayan-USA, and other anti-Arroyo administration groups appear eager to use Melissa Roxas' return to Manila as an opportunity to bring both domestic and international attention not just to her alleged abduction but, more generally, to human rights and social issues in the Philippines. The highly publicized case has the potential to embarrass President Arroyo in advance of the July 27 State of the Nation Address -- the last of her presidency -- and her highly anticipated July 30 meeting with President Obama, which will be followed by a meeting with U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. Roxas claimed emotional distress in declining repeated offers in May and June by U.S. Embassy and FBI officials to discuss her case and file an affidavit, but has shown emotional fearlessness in pursuing a

voluntary, widely-publicized return to the Philippines that has all the ingredients of a protracted -- and acrimonious -- human rights investigation that could continue long after the end of President Arroyo's term.

KENNEY